

Health Literacy: Help Your Patients Understand



Module 1:

Overview of Health Literacy

Presented by:

American Medical Association Foundation & American Medical Association

Learning Objectives:

As a result of this session, the successful learner will be able to:

- | Define and discuss the problem of low health literacy in this country
- | Describe several specific strategies to enhance health literacy

Definitions:

General Literacy:

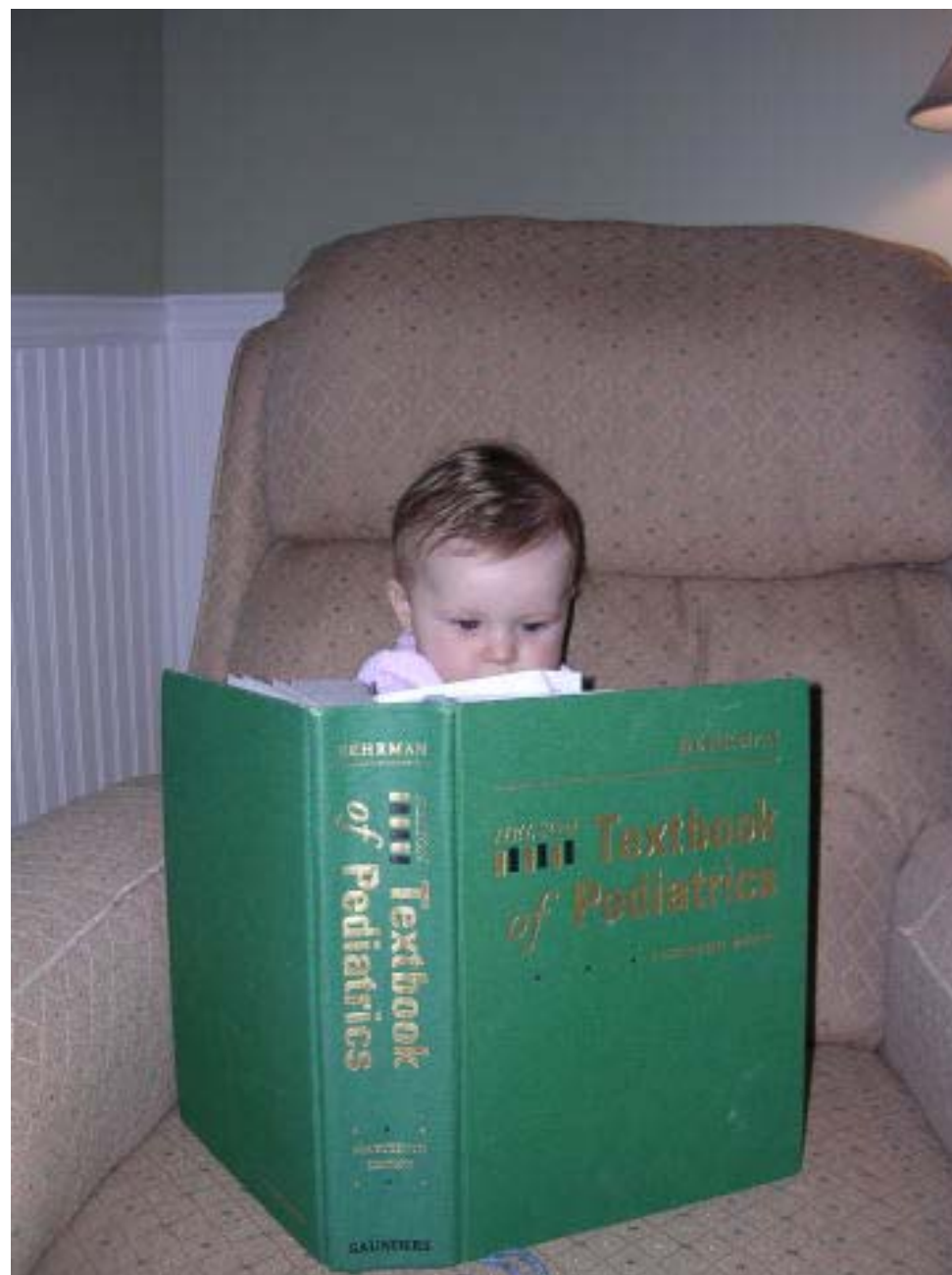
“An individual’s ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one’s goals, and develop one’s knowledge and potential.”

National Literacy Act of 1991

Health Literacy:

“The degree to which individuals have the capacity, to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.”

Healthy People 2010



Inadequate Health Literacy

- 1/2 of the US population may be at risk
 - Misunderstanding
 - Mistakes
 - Excess hospitalizations
 - Poor health outcomes

Why are they at risk?

- Reliance on the written word for patient instruction
- Increasingly complex health system
 - More medications
 - More tests and procedures
 - Growing self-care requirements

What can we do to help?

- Understand the problem
- Identify the barriers faced by both patients and clinicians
- Identify and implement strategies to enhance health literacy
- Advocate for system change

Module 1:

Overview of Health Literacy

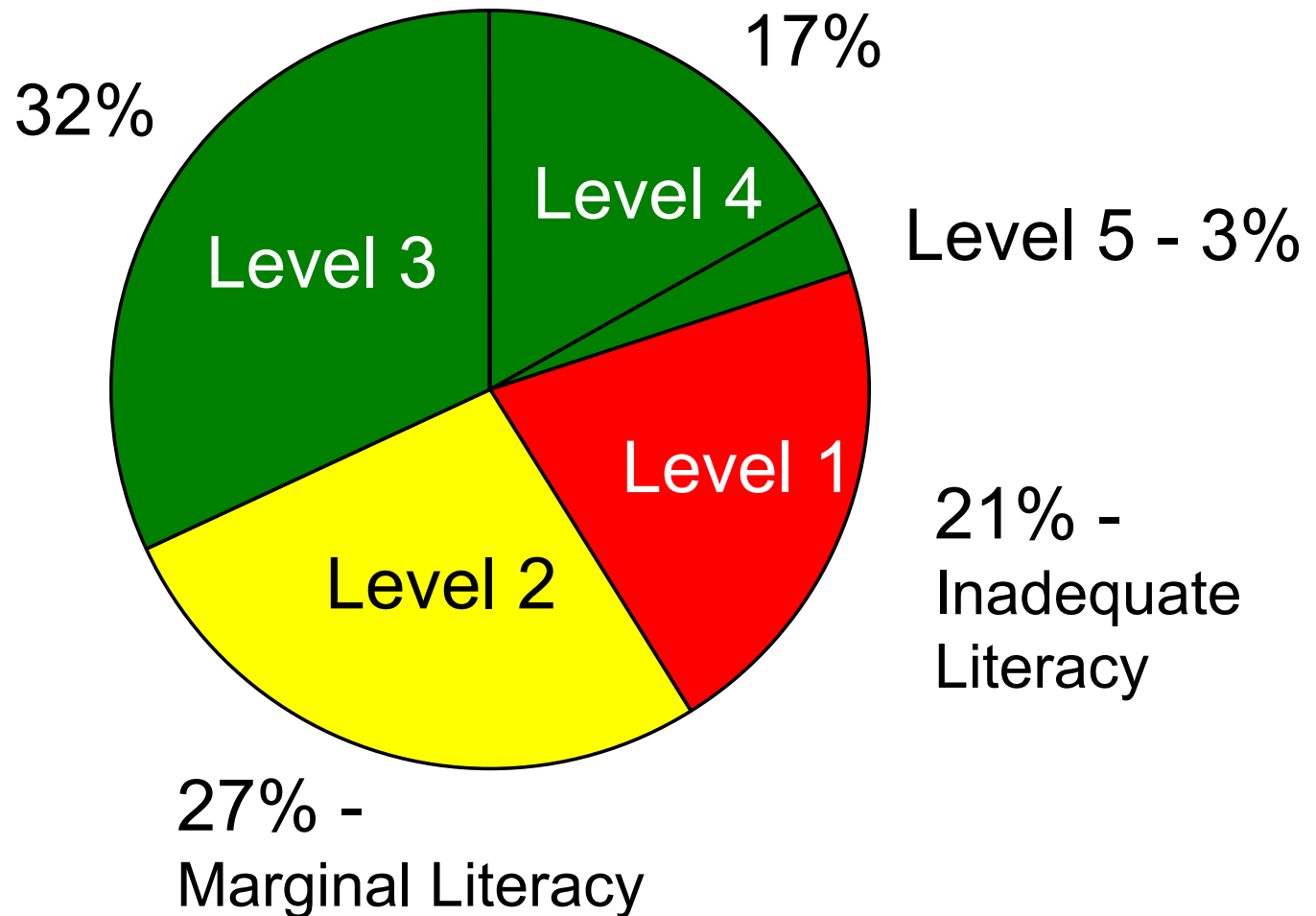
Module Highlights:

- Overview of the problem and implications
- Video with real patients and physicians
- Identify barriers faced by patients
- Practical strategies to address the problem

National Adult Literacy Survey

- | n = 26,000
- | Most accurate portrait of literacy in U.S.
- | Scored on 5 levels
- | Result: 48% of US population have inadequate or marginal literacy skills

1993 National Adult Literacy Survey



NALS Level 1

Inadequate Literacy (21%)

Able to:

- Sign name
- Find a country in an article
- Total a bank deposit entry

Cannot consistently:

- Understand the “gist” of an article.
- Use a bus schedule
- Enter information on a SS application

NALS Level 2

Marginal Literacy (27%)

Able to:

- Find intersection on street map
- Locate information in newspaper article
- Determine difference in price on tickets

Cannot consistently:

- Use a bus schedule
- Identify information from a bar graph
- Write a brief letter of complaint

What Is It Like?

- The following passage simulates what a reader with low general literacy sees on the printed page
- Read the entire passage out loud.
- You have 1 minute to read.
- Hint: The words are written backwards and the first word is “cleaning”

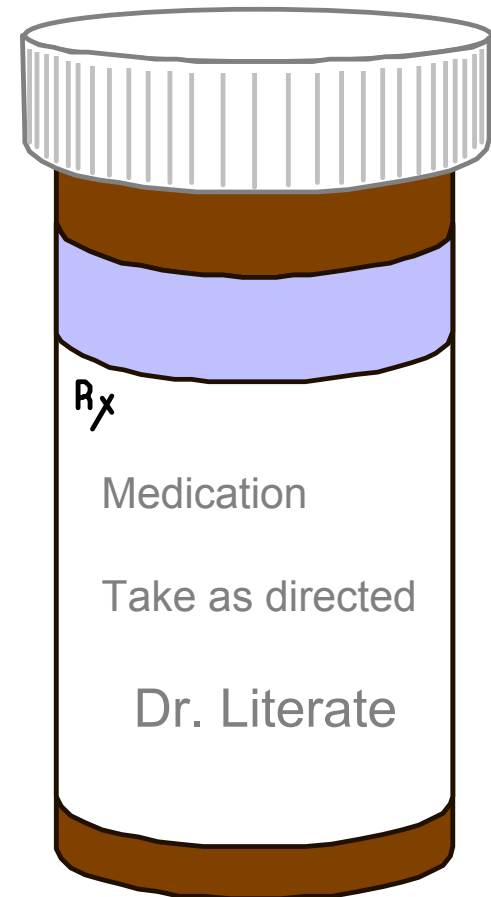
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What Is It Like?

- How do you clean the capstan?

Low Health Literacy = Problems with...

- Medications
- Appointment slips
- Informed consents
- Discharge instructions
- Health education materials
- Insurance applications



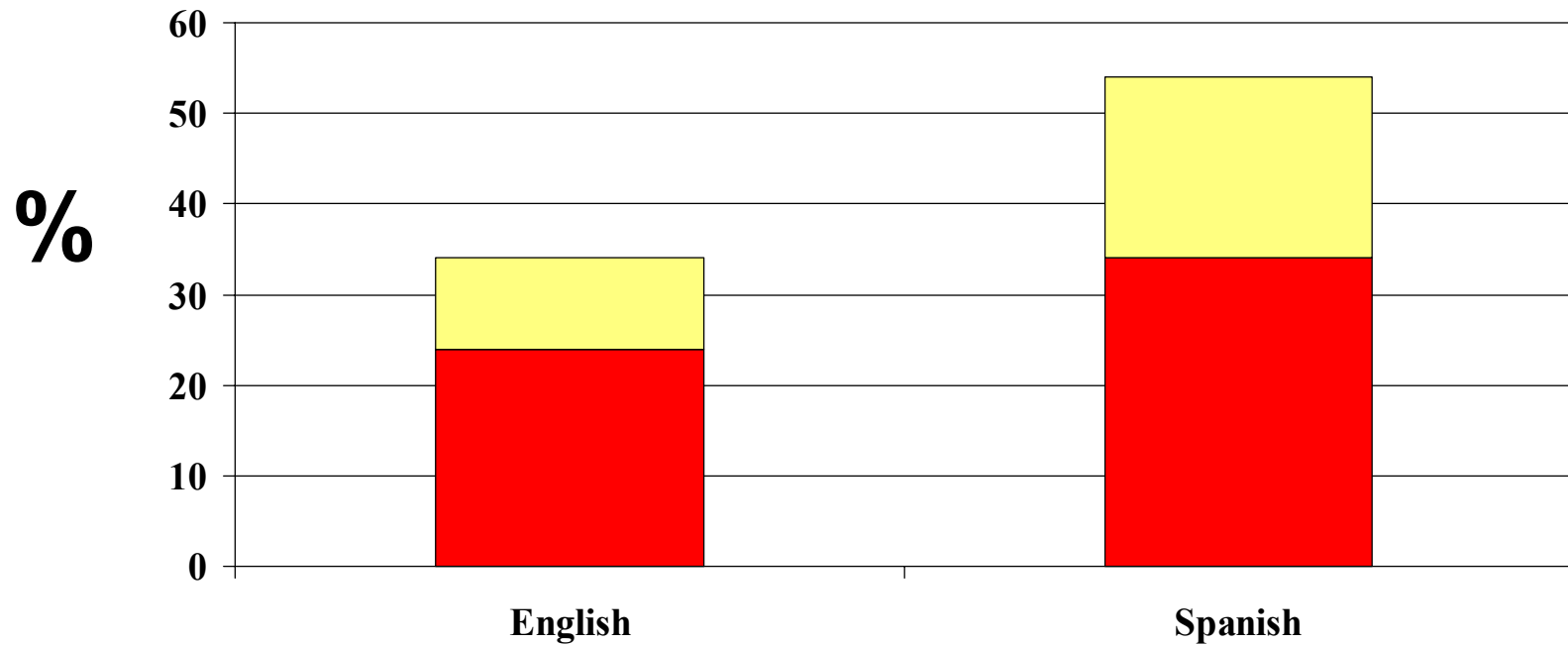
Changes in the Health Care System

	<u>35 Years Ago</u>	<u>Today</u>
Treatment of Acute Myocardial Infarction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 - 6 weeks bed rest in hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2-4 days in hospital (M&R Guidelines)
Available Prescription Drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 650	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10,000 +
Treatment of new onset diabetes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 weeks in hospital 2 hours a day of diabetic education classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• outpatient 0-3 hours diabetic education classes written materials internet telemedicine

Factors that contribute to health literacy:

- General literacy
- Experience with health system
- Complexity of information
- Cultural and language factors
- How information is communicated
- Aging

One Third of SeniorCare Enrollees Had Inadequate Literacy...



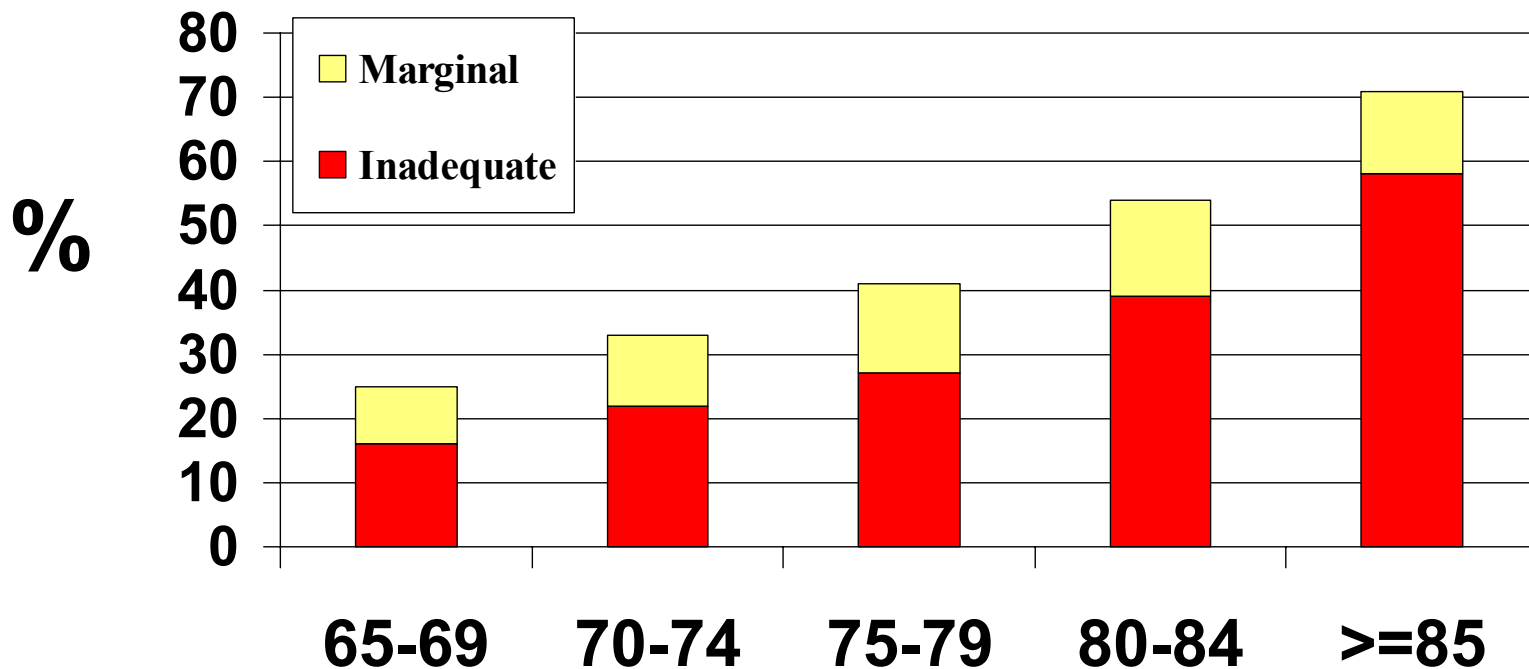
Gazmarian, et al. *JAMA* 1999

Reading Errors for SeniorCare Enrollees with Inadequate Literacy



- Take medicine every 6 hours 48%
- Interpret blood sugar value 68%
- Identify next appointment 27%
- Take medicine on empty stomach 54%
- Upper GI instructions (4th grade) 76%
- Medicaid Rights (10th grade) 100%

Inadequate Health Literacy Increases with Age...



Video: As Patients See It

- This video was made by the AMA in 2003
- You will see real patients and real physicians talking about literacy issues

What are the barriers?

- | Barriers to Access
- | Barriers to Diagnosis
- | Barriers to Treatment

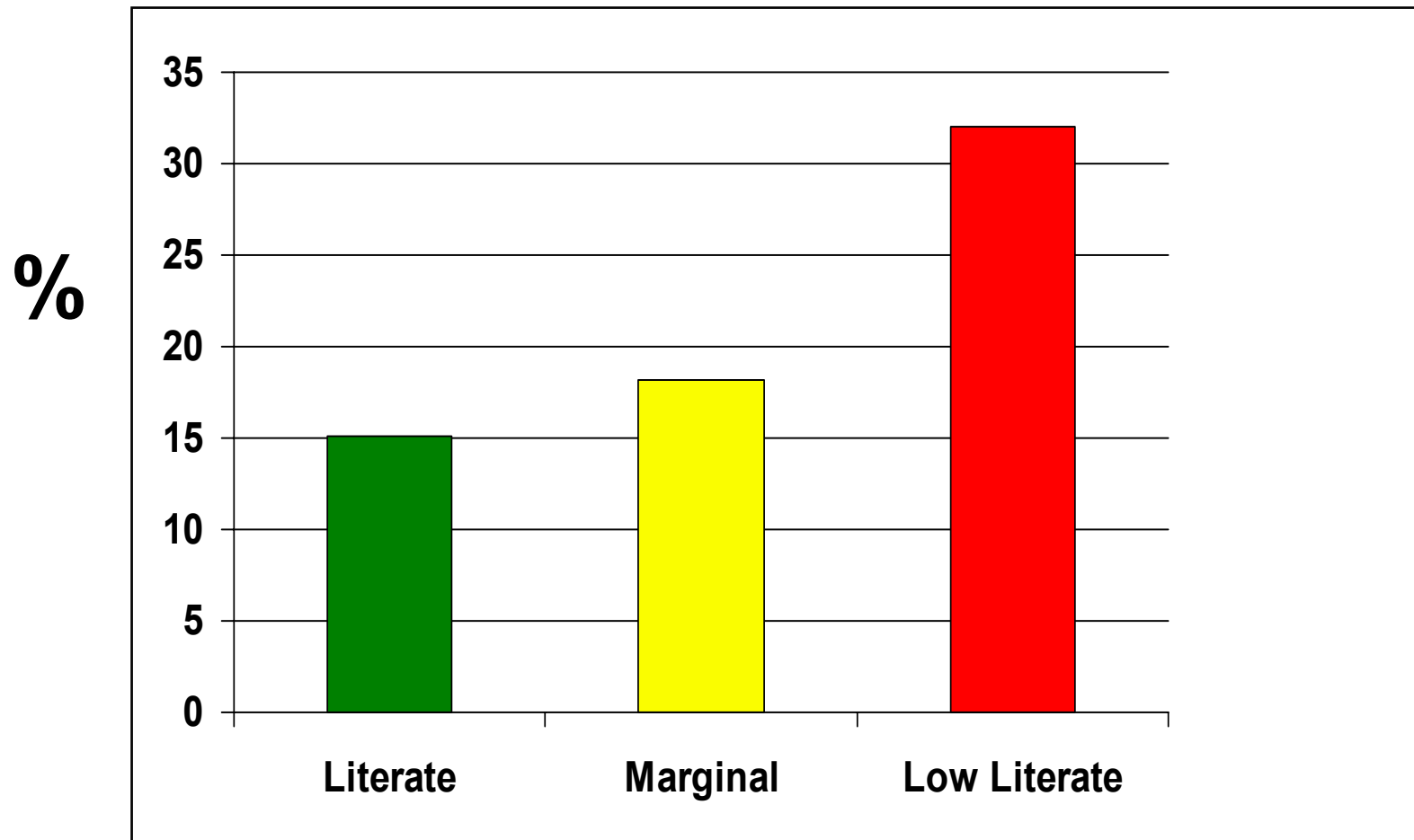
What do we know from a decade of research?

- **Low health literacy leads to:**
 - Lower health knowledge and less healthy behaviors.
 - Poorer health outcomes
 - Greater health costs
- **Specific communication techniques may enhance health literacy.**

Health Knowledge Deficits for Patients with Low Literacy

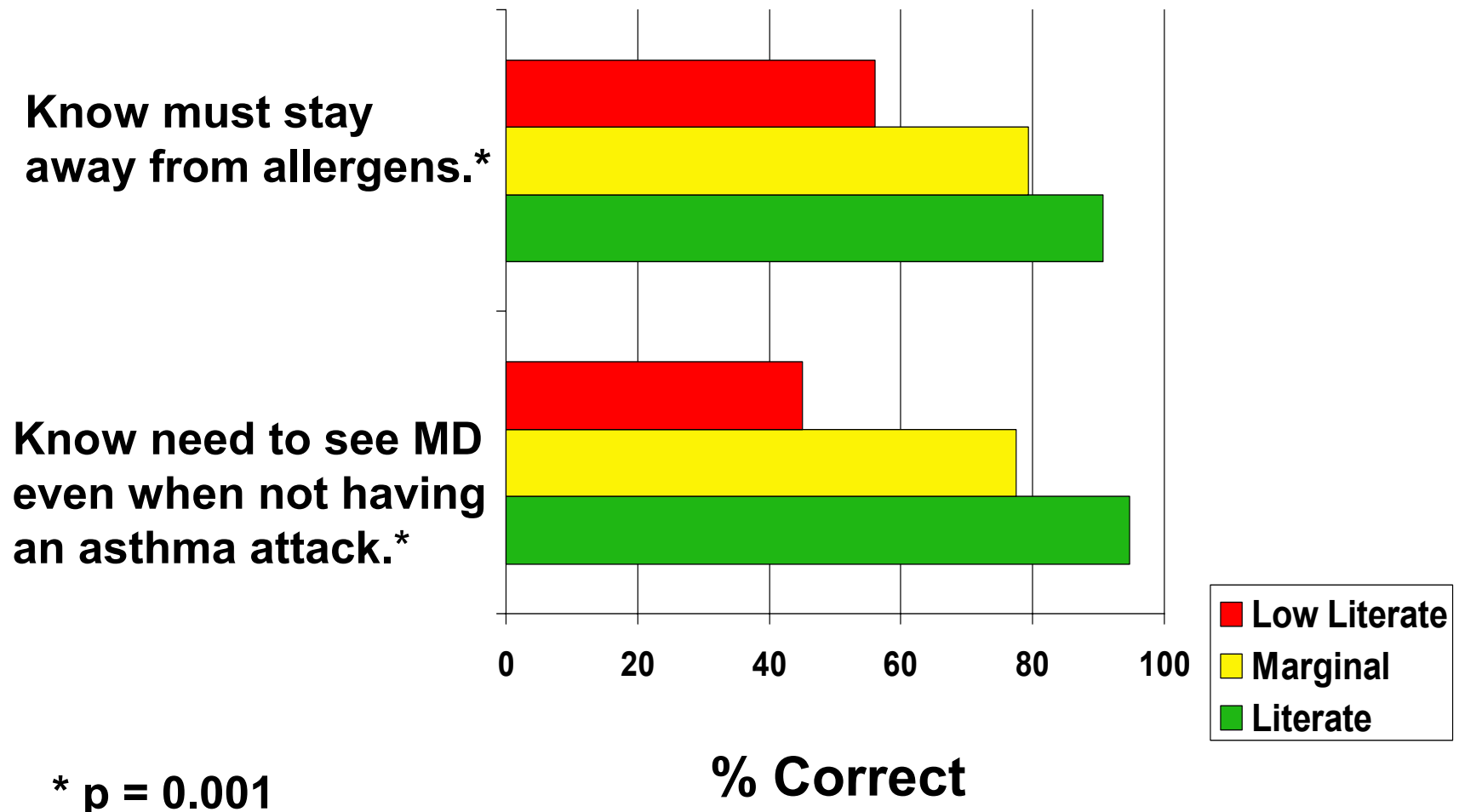
- Patients with asthma less likely to know how to use an inhaler
- Patients with diabetes less likely to know symptoms of hypoglycemia
- Patients with hypertension less likely to know that weight loss and exercise lower blood pressure
- Mothers less likely to know how to read a thermometer.

Patients with Low Literacy More Likely to be Hospitalized



Baker, Parker, Williams, et al. *JGIM* 1999

Poor Reading Skills Correlate with Less Knowledge of Asthma



Research also shows that:

- Literacy is the single best predictor of health status
- It is a stronger predictor than age, income, employment status, education level, or racial and ethnic group

Patients with low literacy were:

- 69% more likely to have late stage diagnosis of prostate CA at presentation.
(Bennet, *J Clin Oncol* 1998)
- 4 times more likely to be non-compliant with Anti-HIV meds.
(Kalichman S, et al. *JGIM* 1999)

Less Healthy Behaviors for Patients with Low Literacy

- More exposure to violence
- Pregnant women more likely to smoke
- Less breastfeeding
- Less likely to be get flu vaccine or pneumovax

“Teach back” works

- “Asking that patients recall and restate what they have been told” is one of 11 top patient safety practices based on strength of scientific evidence.
(AHRQ, 2001 Report on *Making Health Care Safer*)
- Physicians’ application of interactive communication to assess recall or comprehension was associated with better glycemic control for diabetic patients.
(Arch Intern Med/Vol 163, Jan 13, 2003, “Closing the Loop”)

What have other docs tried?

- Medication reviews helped to identify and address health literacy problems
- Maps on the back of appointment letters cut down on “no shows”
- Maps on the back of requisition slips increased completed lab work
- Organized, simplified pre-op instructions, both written and verbal, cut surgical same-day cancellations from 5% to .8%

Guiding Principles

- Provide easy-to-understand information for ALL patients.
- Ensure the environment is patient-friendly and shame-free for ALL patients.


Summary: Specific strategies to enhance health literacy...

- Create a shame-free environment
- Enhance assessment strategies
- Improve interpersonal communication with patients
- Create and use patient-friendly materials

AMA Foundation's Health Literacy Initiative provides tools:

- Video and “Manual for Clinicians”
- Power Point slides with facilitator notes
- Participant Guides
- Faculty Guide
- Evaluation questionnaires
- Feedback and networking
- Small grants

Who to contact for more information:



- Website:
 - www.amafoundation.org
- E-mail:
 - healthliteracy@ama-assn.org
- Other resources
 - See Participant Guide

